

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2201

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FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR EG US

SUBJ: MESSAGE TO SADAT ON LEBANON

REF: STATE 094215

SUMMARY: HAVE GIVEN FAHMY YOUR MESSAGE TO SADAT AND
AT FAHMY'S REQUEST, ALSO READ IT TO HIM. WHILE
ACCEPTING OUR POSITION, HE CONTENTED NONE IN AREA
DOES SO. IN HIS VIEW, WE ARE CATERING TOO MUCH
TO ASAD IN ORDER TO OBTAIN UNDOF RENEWAL. RENEWAL
WILL IN ANY CASE TAKE PLACE. WE HAD IN EFFECT
GIVEN GREEN LIGHT TO LIMITED SYRIAN MILITARY
INTERVENTION WHEN AUTHORIZING FRENCH TO TELL ASAD
THAT ANYTHING OVER BRIGADE STRENGTH WOULD BRING
ISRAELI COUNTER MEASURES. SYRIANS HAVE ALWAYS HAD
MORE THAN A BRIGADE IN LEBANON. HE WAS ALSO STRUCK
BY ISRAELI QUIESCENCE IN FACE OF THE SYRIAN
MILITARY INTERVENTION, WHICH PEOPLE BELIEVE MUST
BE DUE TO SOME SYRIAN-ISRAELI COLLUSION ARRANGED BY
US. PRESENT SYRIAN-IMPOSED ARRANGEMENT IN LEBANON
WILL NOT LAST. ARAFAT IS WORKING WITH ASAD SOLELY
FOR REASONS OF EXPEDIENCY. FAHMY EXPRESSED INTEREST
IN OUR PROMISED ANALYSIS OF LEBANESE SITUATION.
HE WOULD ALSO LIKE A FULLER REPORT ON OUR RECENT
TALKS WITH HUSSEIN AND ZAID RIFAI. END SUMMARY

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1. I MET WITH FAHMY EARLY THIS AFTERNOON TO CONVEY YOUR MESSAGE. FAHMY IS STILL SUFFERING FROM THE AFTER EFFECTS OF THE FLU AND WAS OBVIOUSLY NOT FEELING WELL. HE ASKED THAT I READ THE MESSAGE TO HIM, WHICH I DID. HE INTERRUPTED SEVERAL TIMES TO COMMENT ON ITS CONTENTS.

2. FIRST, HE CONTENDED THAT WHILE GOE MAY ACCEPT OUR POSITION AS PRESENTED IN THE MESSAGE, NO ONE IN THE AREA DOES SO. WE HAVE BEEN PUBLICLY PRAISING ASAD AS A STATESMAN, WHILE WE TALK ABOUT SADAT " AS A MAN WHO GIVES CONCESSIONS". I PROTESTED STRONGLY THAT THIS STATEMENT WAS TOTALLY UNTRUE. MORE THAN ANY OTHER PERSON, FAHMY SHOULD KNOW HOW OFTEN SADAT'S COURAGE AND STATESMANSHIP HAVE BEEN PUBLICLY APPLAUDED BY SENIOR USG OFFICIALS FROM PRESIDENT FORD ON DOWN. FAHMY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THIS IS SO, BUT ARGUED THAT THE AMERICAN PRESS IS CARRYING THE COMPARISON AND THAT ASAD'S PRESTIGE HAS BEEN RAISED BY DEPT PRESS BRIEFINGS. GOE HAS NO OBJECTION TO GOOD USG RELATIONS WITH ASAD, BUT WE WILL SEE HOW WRONG OUR INFLATED ESTIMATE OF ASAD TURNS OUT TO BE. USG IS CONCERNED THAT ASAD MAY NOT RENEW UNDOF, HENCE IS CATERING TO HIM IN THE HOPES THAT HE WILL DO SO. AS SADAT AND HE HAD FREQUENTLY TOLD US, THERE IS NO NEED TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT UNDOF RENEWAL. ASAD HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO DO SO . NO ONE NEED AGAIN PAY HIM A PRICE TO DO WHAT HE KNOWS IS IN HIS OWN INTEREST. IN ANY CASE, HUSSEIN MUST ALREADY HAVE ASSURED US THAT ASAD WILL RENEW UNDOF.

3. FAHMY PICKED UP THE SENTENCE THAT "WE HAVE IN NO WAY BEEN CONSULTED ABOUT OR GIVEN CONSENT TO SUCH SYRIAN MILITARY ACTIONS--- DIRECT AND INDIRECT"" AS HAVE TAKEN PLACE." WE SHOULD NOT CONSIDER HIM "NAIVE". HE KNEW WE HAD GIVEN A GREEN LIGHT ON LIMITED SYRIAN MILITARY INTERVENTION. WE HAD EARLIER TOLD THE FRENCH THEY SHOULD TELL ASAD THAT ANYTHING OVER BRIGADE STRENGTH AND DEPLOYMENT SOUTH OF THE

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DAMASCUS/BEIRUT LINE WOULD BRING AN ISRAELI COUNTER REACTION (STATE 074932). AS HE HAD WARNED AT THE TIME, THIS WAS A GREEN LIGHT TO SYRIA TO INTERVENE (CAIRO 4028) I RECALLED I, TOO, HAD TOLD HIM AT THE TIME THAT HIS INTERPRETATION WAS WRONG. THE SYRIANS ALREADY HAD FORCE OF ABOUT A BRIGADE STRENGTH IN SYRIA AND OUR WHOLE PURPOSE HAD BEEN TO PREVENT THEM FROM INCREASING THESE FORCES. FAHMY

ARGUED THAT EVEN THEN THE SYRIAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN LEBANON,, ADMITTEDLY IN SA'IQA AND PLA UNIFORMS, WAS MUCH GREATER THAN 6,000 MEN. HE HAD TOLD US THAT AT THE TIME AND WE REFUSED TO BELIEVE IT.

4. MOREOVER, THE FACT THAT THE ISRAELIS, WHO FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS HAVE ATTACKED SOUTHERN LEBANON ON THE SLIGHTEST PRETEXT AND SOMETIMES WITHOUT ANY, ARE NOW TOTALLY QUIET DESPITE THE SYRIAN MILITARY INTERVENTION. THIS CAN HARDLY BE COINCIDENTIAL. IT MAKES PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT THERE MUST BE SOME SYRIAN-ISRAELI "COLLUSION" ARRANGED BY THE US. WHY ELSE WOULD THE ISRAELIS SUDDENLY REMAIN INEXPLICABLY QUIET? THE ISRAELIS HAVE THEMSELVES ANNOUNCED THAT A "RED LINE" HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED BEHIND WHICH THE SYRIANS MIGHT NOT GO WITHOUT RISKING ISRAELI COUNTER MEASURES AND THAT THIS HAD BEEN ARRANGED THROUGH THE US.

5. I REMINDED FAHMY WE HAVE KEPT HIM FULLY INFORMED, EVEN DURING THE PRESIDENT'S EUROPEAN TRIP, OF HOW WE VIEW THE EVOLVING LEBANESE SITUATION. HE DESCRIBED OUR MESSAGES AS LARGELY "COMPOSITION" WITHOUT ANY MEANINGFUL SUBSTANCE. HE HAD HAD FAR BETTER REPORTS FROM HIS OWN PEOPLE. HE KNEW, FOR EXAMPLE , THAT IT WAS BROWN WHO PERSUADED THE LEBANESE TO AMEND ARTICLE 73, NOT THE SYRIANS. THIS HAD BEEN A HOPEFUL SIGN THAT THE THE LEBANESE MIGHT FINALLY MOVE. THE SYRIANS HAD BECOME "JEALOUS" ABOUT BROWN'S ROLE, WHILE ARAFAT WAS FEARFUL THAT WE AND THE SYRIANS HAD CONCOCTED SOMETHING BEHIND HIS BACK. THAT WAS THE REASON ARAFAT WORKED ON JUMBLATT. BUT THE PRESENT SYRIAN- IMPOSED ARRANGEMENT
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WILL NOT LAST. FOR THE MOMENT, ARAFAT FINDS IT CONVENIENT TO WORK WITH ASAD, BUT SOLELY FOR REASONS OF EXPEDIENCY.

6. I URGED FAHMY TO READ YOUR MESSAGE FOR HIMSELF. HE WOULD FIND IT A SINCERE EFFORT TO SET FORTH OUR VIEWS AND TO REFUTE SOME OF THE TOTALLY WRONG ALLEGATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN LEVELED AGAINST OUR ROLE. HE HIMSELF SEEMED TO BE ENGAGING IN SPECULATION WITHOUT REGARD TO THE FACTS. AS WE HAD REPEATEDLY TOLD HIM, WE VIEW SADAT AS PREEMINENT IN THE AREA AND WANT TO WORK WITH HIM IN CONNECTION WITH LEBANON AS WELL AS ELSEWHERE. I URGED HIM TO GIVE OUR MESSAGE OBJECTIVE STUDY. HE SAID HE WOULD DO SO LATER IN THE DAY. HE ALSO GAVE INSTRUCTIONS THAT IT BE

TRANSLATED INTO ARABIC AND SENT TO SADAT AT BURG AL-ARAB.

7. FINALLY, HE INDICATED HE WILL BE INTERESTED IN
HEARING OUR DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE LEBANESE
SITUATION AND ADDED HE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A FULLER
REPORT ON OUR RECENT TALKS WITH HUSSEIN AND ZAID
RIFAI.
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